THE MANITOBA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
LA COMMISSION DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE DU MANITOBA

connections

Equality of Opportunity and Freedom from Discrimination

Court of Appeal to decide if all Manitobans have access to the Commission

On March 1, 2017, the Commission argued before the Manitoba Court of Appeal that all Manitobans, even unionized employees, have the right to complain of discrimination to the Commission.

Thor Hansell, representing the Commission, emphasized to the Court that allowing the lower court's decision in *Northen Regional Health Authority v. Manitoba Human Rights Commission and Horrocks* to stand would effectively make *The Human Rights Code* a law for everyone but unionized employees. "This is a matter of policy, not for the courts". The Commission took the position that if the legislature had intended to give labour arbitrators exclusive jurisdiction over human rights matters, they would have made that clear in the *Labour Relations Act*.

The NRHA argued that employees already give up certain rights when they become members of a union, including the ability to pursue wrongful dismissal claims through the courts, and that this would be similar.

If the appeal is dismissed, the Commission will have to change its long-standing approach to accepting complaints from unionized employees. Currently, the Commission respects the choice of an employee to pursue their complaint with the Commission, acknowledging that labour arbitrators share jurisdiction with the Commission and the Manitoba Human Rights Adjudication Panel when it comes to discrimination in the workplace, so long as one or the other has not made a final decision in the matter.

The Court of Appeal's decision is awaited by many in the labour and human rights community.

To read about the Horrocks decisions that gave rise to this jurisdictional debate, visit www.manitobahumanrights.ca/decisions.html

The Rights Connection

By Isha Khan, Executive Director & Counsel

A few weeks ago, we ventured further into the world of social media with- **Better late than never! #ourfirsttweet**

We are slowly building a following of human rights supporters and rights-based agencies on twitter.

We committed in our Strategic Plan to finding new and better ways of exercising our mandate to educate the public about human rights principles and *The Human Rights Code*.

Although our Facebook following remains strong and stable, twitter allows us be part of a global conversation about human rights in a faster-paced setting.

Within the next few months we will be able to finally launch our new website, which is more accessible and easier to navigate. This combined with a stronger social media presence is all part of the plan to reach more Manitobans, more often with information about developments in human rights law, the Commission's activities and general information about *The Human Rights Code*.

Follow us on Twitter @MBHumanRights

Commission takes seminar program on the road

The Commission took its two-day seminar program to Brandon, Manitoba on February 21 and 22, 2017.

The new seminar program is structured in four consecutive 1/2 day sessions covering The Business of Human Rights, Harassment in the Workplace, Reasonable Accommodation in the Workplace and Accommodating Mental Health in the Workplace. Participants can register for one or more of the sessions at a cost of $125 per session.

The Commission has found that the in-person education sessions give participants a real opportunity to engage in discussion with the presenters as they work through scenarios, but also to share their experiences and observations with particpants from other workplaces.

The Commission will take the show on the road to other areas of the province beginning in early summer. If your business community would be interested in having us come out. email us at hrc@gov.mb.ca.

Our next seminar program will be in Winnipeg on April 6 and 7, 2017. There are still a few spots left. Register at www.manitobahumanrights.ca.

Celebrating Women and Their Achievements

On March 8 the World recognized International Women's Day, a day to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women.

This year's theme is #BeBoldForChange. The campaign urges us- women, men and non-binary people- to join forces so that we can lead within our own spheres of influence by taking "bold pragmatic action to accelerate gender parity."

Local women's groups found different ways to formally celebrate the day. The Islamic Circle of North America hosted a diverse group of agencies for a free lunch at the Grand Mosque, where they heard from leaders from IRCOM and Elmwoood Women's Resource Centre and others.

The Manitoba government hosted an event at the Legislature focusing on the great strides of women in science and engineering given that women continue to be significantly under-represented in non-traditional occupations.

"We acknowledge the triumphs and challenges women in these careers face, and we hope to encourage girls in Manitoba to explore these exciting fields of study," said Sport, Culture and Heritage Minister Rochelle Squires.

Premier Pallister and Minister Squires with members of the International Women's Day Panel

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